



U.S. Department of Justice

Ronald C. Machen Jr.
*United States Attorney for the
District of Columbia*

*Judiciary Center
555 Fourth St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530*

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 2, 2010

For Information Contact:

Public Affairs

(202) 514-6933

http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/dc/Press_Releases/index.html

District Woman Pleads Guilty to Conspiring to Steal United States and District of Columbia Treasury Checks from Mail

WASHINGTON – A 22-year-old District woman, Rarsheeda Austin, pleaded guilty today to one count of Conspiracy to Commit Mail Fraud for her role in a scheme to steal United States and District of Columbia treasury checks from the mail and cash them at local check-cashing establishments using fake identification documents, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. announced. Austin entered her guilty plea in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia before the Honorable John D. Bates. Austin is scheduled to be sentenced on September 21, 2010, and could face up to 6 months in prison under the voluntary Federal Sentencing Guidelines as a result of the guilty plea. As part of her plea, Austin agreed to pay \$1,972.53 in restitution to the District of Columbia Treasury.

According to evidence presented at the plea hearing, beginning in or about January 2009, and continuing until on or about February 3, 2010, Austin was involved with a number of other individuals in a scheme to take and steal United States and District of Columbia treasury checks from the custody and control of the United States Postal Service ("USPS") and, using fake and fraudulent identification documents, cash those checks at check-cashing establishments in the Washington, D.C. area by posing as the intended recipients of the checks. Austin was transported by a co-conspirator to different stores where she had her photograph taken. Those photographs were used to obtain false and fraudulent identification documents. These identification documents bore her photograph but the names and addresses of the intended recipients of stolen treasury checks.

As her part of the scheme, Austin cashed at least two stolen District of Columbia treasury checks using false and fraudulent identification documents. On or about January 29, 2009, Austin received from a co-conspirator a District of Columbia treasury check in the amount of \$1,022.07, which was payable to S.B. The check had been stolen from a USPS facility in Washington, D.C., by a USPS mail carrier, S.W. Austin cashed that check at a liquor store using a false District of Columbia identification card bearing her photograph but the name and address of S.B. On or about February 3, 2010, Austin received from a co-conspirator a District of Columbia treasury check in the amount of \$950.46, which was payable to J.R. Like the previous check, this check had been stolen from a USPS facility in Washington, D.C., by USPS mail carrier S.W. Austin

cashed this check at a liquor store using a false District of Columbia driver's license bearing her photograph but the name and address of J.R.

In exchange for cashing these checks, Austin was paid by a co-conspirator a portion of the face value of the checks. Altogether, Austin and the other members of the stolen check scheme were responsible for the theft and fraudulent negotiation of over \$120,000 in stolen United States and District of Columbia treasury checks. More than 50 individuals and businesses were victimized by the scheme either because their mail was stolen or because they sustained an economic loss by cashing the checks.

In announcing today's guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Machen commended the outstanding investigative work of agents of the USPS Office of Inspector General, Special Agent Derek Savoy of the District of Columbia Office of Inspector General, agents of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, agents of the U.S. Secret Service, and Detective Michael Pavero of the Metropolitan Police Department. U.S. Attorney Machen also praised the efforts of members of the U.S. Attorney's Office, including Legal Assistant Jamasee Lucas, Paralegal Specialists Sarah Reis and Mary Treanor, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Ellen Chubin Epstein and David Johnson, who are prosecuting the case.